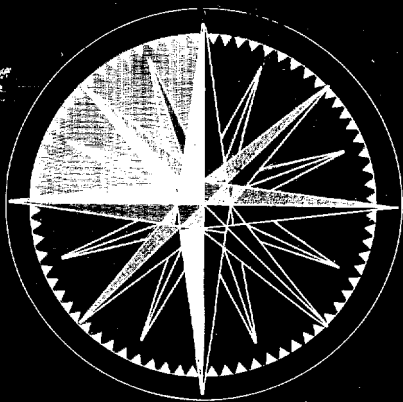


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# SPECIAL REPORT

THE OPPOSITION IN FRANCE SINCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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### THE OPPOSITION IN FRANCE SINCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Opposition political parties in France were given a psychological boost by their relative success against De Gaulle in the presidential election last December. Political figures such as Francois Mitterrand and Jean Lecanuet who gained national prominence at that time have since concentrated their efforts on the formation of new political groupings. The opposition faces severe problems, however, in trying to create a meaningful political alternative to Gaullism. The democratic opposition parties are split both internally and among themselves. They differ on such matters as whether to confine the search for allies to the right or the left, whether to cooperate with the Communist Party, what organizational form to give to the new political groups, and whether to emphasize electoral victory over long-range program formulation. The Communist Party, meanwhile, is seeking to take advantage of this disarray and trying to extend the cooperation it enjoyed with the left during the election.

#### Effect of the Election

The presidential election, the first conducted by direct popular vote since 1848, revived opposition to De Gaulle and stimulated the activity of parties dormant under the Gaullist domination of the political scene. It gave impetus to a fundamental debate among the opposition parties as to the most effective means for challenging Gaullism in the immediate future and for developing a viable political grouping in a post - De Gaulle era. Politicians were encouraged by the unprecedented turnout of approximately 85 percent of the registered electorate and by the intensity of public interest in the campaigns waged by the opposition candidates.

Two of the candidates, Francois Mitterrand of the Democratic and Socialist Resistance Union (UDSR) and Jean Lecanuet of the Catholic-oriented Popular Republican Movement (MRP), were launched on careers as national personalities of presidential caliber. De Gaulle himself had to back off from his opening campaign statement that the choice was between him and chaos.

The election results have also caused leaders of the Gaullist Union for the New Republic (UNR) to rethink their relationship with De Gaulle. Having ridden into power on his coattails in the 1962 National Assembly elections, but having generally failed to establish grass-roots support among the

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# **PARTY STRENGTHS IN THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY** (Elected November 1962)

POPULAR REPUBLICANS (MRP) 39	<b>UNION FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC AND DEMOCRATIC UNION OF LABOR</b> 231 (These Gaullist parties command a majority because of regular support from Independent Republicans and occasional backing from Radicals and Popular Republicans.)	<b>482 DEPUTIES</b>	INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS 35
RADICALS AND CENTER LEFT 38			INDEPENDENTS (CNIP) 16
SOCIALISTS 66			DEPUTIES BELONGING TO SPLINTER PARTIES OR UNAFFILIATED 16
COMMUNISTS 41			

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## **MAJOR NEW OPPOSITION POLITICAL GROUPS IN FRANCE**

Federation of Democratic and Socialist Left December 1965 Francois Mitterrand, leader of the Democratic and Socialist Resistance Union (UDSR) Socialist Party Radical Party UDSR Political clubs To seek a common program and electoral strategy, while allowing participating parties to preserve separate identities. Hopes to attract Communist votes and minor support from the MRP.	GROUP DATE OF FORMATION PRESIDENT PARTICIPANTS ORGANIZATIONAL AIM ELECTORAL APPEAL	Democratic Center February 1966 Jean Lecanuet, former president of Popular Republican Movement (MRP) MRP Independent Party Political clubs To fuse existing parties into organic union. Hopes to attract Gaullist votes on the right and Radical and some Socialist votes on the left.
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electorate, the UNR now faces the real prospect of losing its parliamentary majority in 1967. A recently published study of districts where assembly deputies were elected by a small majority concludes that Gaullists are in danger of defeat in 77 of the 231 electoral districts they now hold.

#### New Political Groupings

Seeking to capitalize on the public exposure provided by the campaign and to exploit the momentum gathered during that period, both Mitterrand and Lecanuet have formed new political groups.

Lecanuet launched his Democratic Center on 2 February and has tentatively scheduled a convention for 22-23 April to formalize its establishment. This group, which claims it has already received 40,000 membership applications, embraces all of Lecanuet's MRP and the Independent Party as well as some individual members of the Radical Party. Lecanuet's ultimate aim is to dissolve the old parties altogether and merge them under a program which will appeal from center-left to center-right. For the present, however, the idea of formal fusion has been abandoned, because adherents of all but the MRP have refused to give up their party ties until they can be more certain of the future of the new grouping.

Mitterrand's group, the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left, has the formal allegiance of the Radical Party, the Socialist Party (SFIO), Mit-

terrand's UDSR, and a number of political clubs, all of which backed him in the presidential election. Although the federation carefully excludes the Communist Party, which also supported Mitterrand's candidacy last December, it still makes allies of parties and organizations whose basic objectives vary considerably. Furthermore, its policy of extending full membership only to members of one of the component parties or clubs will limit its appeal.

The candidate of the far right in the presidential election, Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, created still another new formation in mid-January--the Republican Alliance for Progress and Liberty. Some of Tixier's more militant election backers have already indicated their displeasure with the alliance's "moderate" program, however, and refused to support the new group.

#### Splits Within the Old Parties

The December election and its aftermath have emphasized the divisions within the traditional parties.

In the Socialist Party the election strengthened the hand of long-time secretary general Guy Mollet but fanned again his smoldering controversy with Marseille Mayor Gaston Defferre. Defferre, the major leftist opposition candidate for the presidency until his withdrawal last summer, crossed swords with Mollet at that time over the question of whether to form a purely leftist grouping or one embracing the center as well. Defferre's

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attempt to form a "big federation" including both left and center parties foundered because none of the parties was willing to subordinate its own ideology and orientation to a grouping representing all the parties. Now both sides have taken their arguments into the press, with Mollet's supporters continuing to defend the Socialist strategy of forming only transitory and tactical alliances with parties both to the left and right.

Mitterrand's surprisingly strong showing against De Gaulle, traceable in part to his use of the Mollet tactic, has put Mollet in a sufficiently strong position to reject the Defferrists' call for an extraordinary Socialist Party congress to discuss future orientation and tactics. Defferre and a half dozen of his supporters have resigned from the party directorate, although not from the party, but they have no realistic hope of wresting control from Mollet in the near future. Mollet, for his part, must calculate the effects of continued dissidence on the party's hopes for electoral gains in 1967.

Prior to the presidential election, a number of leaders of the center-left Radical Party had indicated willingness to associate themselves with a center grouping, but the election results qualified this sentiment. In the Radical strongholds, the appeal of political cooperation with the French Communist Party (PCF) has greatly increased as

a result of the leftist collaboration in the past election. Moreover, a majority of the conglomerate Radical Party is much further to the left in political orientation than Lecanuet, a strong anti-Communist whose identification with the Catholics is also unacceptable to many. Looking toward the 1967 election, the Radicals see that they will be far more dependent on PCF votes than on assistance from the center. Radical president Maurice Faure reportedly believes a commitment to Lecanuet would automatically cut the Radicals off from PCF support, leaving them to be crushed between the Communists and the Gaullists. Nevertheless, Faure and a few other party members have accepted offices in Lecanuet's Democratic Center even though the Radical Party itself is committed to Mitterrand's federation.

The Independent Party (NID) is supporting the Democratic Center, but many members doubt the wisdom of this move. The reluctance of the CNIP to merge itself into Lecanuet's group was one of the reasons he was forced to delay his plans for a total fusion of the constituent parties. Some Independent leaders fear that, if they move into a larger center formation, they run the risk of creating a vacuum into which the Gaullists could move. CNIP president Camille Laurens has indicated that a significant number of his party's deputies and senators might balk at formal alliance with the MRP, and join instead the Gaullist-allied Independent

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Republican Party. The omission of that party's leader, former finance minister Giscard d'Estaing, from De Gaulle's post-election government has led the party to adopt a less Gaullist stance, making the defection of some CNIP members a real possibility.

Given the uneasy relationship which exists within each of the new groupings, prospects for cooperation between them remain poor. Their mutual interest in opposing De Gaulle, however, has resulted in some tentative feelers. Lecanuet has indicated that his grouping would be amenable to contacts with the Mitterrand-led federation, but has posed the condition that the federation have nothing to do with the Communists. Mollet expects to talk with Lecanuet about the possibility of developing a "majority contract," which would require all participating parties to agree in advance on a common program of government which they would pledge themselves to adopt in the event they obtained a majority in next year's parliamentary election and were called on to form a new government.

#### Communist Postelection Position

The PCF delivered what has been reliably estimated as 90 percent of its vote to leftist candidate Mitterrand in the presidential election, and party members gave him strong and effective campaign support. Armed with this record, the PCF is attempt-

ing to parlay a temporary electoral alliance with the non-Communist left into a more lasting relationship which could effectively end its political isolation.

Statements by PCF leaders since the election indicate that, for the time being, the party will avoid making demands which could break up the "partnership." Rather, the PCF is pressing for the adoption of a common program by all of the parties and organizations comprising the left, a step which it repeatedly but unsuccessfully urged prior to the campaign. In mid-January, party secretary general Waldeck-Rochet sent a letter to all leftist groups proposing discussions with a view to formulating a joint minimum political program.

With their hopes fastened on ending the Gaullist majority in 1967, the leftist parties will be strongly tempted to seek some alliance with the Communists. To make an alliance more palatable, the PCF has repeated its campaign statements that it no longer opposes French membership in the EEC or insists on advance agreement about France's withdrawal from NATO as a price for PCF electoral cooperation. The party has also given assurances that it rejects the idea that one party alone will have to bring about the socialist transformation of France.

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Thus far the left has responded cautiously. Only the far left Unified Socialist Party and the Communist-dominated labor union have responded affirmatively to the call for joint discussion. The Socialist Party has stalled, indicating that any definition of a joint program is in the hands of Mitterrand's federation, which presumably will at some point enter into such discussions.

Some major leftist leaders have expressed serious reservations about extensive cooperative efforts. Defferre maintains that a fruitful dialogue with the PCF is possible only if the left first creates a large political formation that is more powerful and more attractive than the Communist Party. Mollet and Mitterrand, while not ruling out temporary cooperation with limited aims, stress that, until the PCF is "sanitized" and "de-internationalized," basic political discussions are meaningless.

The PCF itself has not allowed its drive for admission to the respectable left to overcome its efforts to gain ground alone where it can. In several local elections it has run candidates against non-Communist leftists and has announced that it will enter its own candidates in each electoral district for the first round of the National Assembly elections. As elections draw nearer, the pressures on both the PCF and the non-Communist left to cooperate will grow stronger.

#### Current Strategy

With all the problems they face in trying to put together a positive program and a more unified political force, the opposition parties at least are agreed in seeking to put De Gaulle's government on the defensive whenever possible. The Ben Barka affair--the abduction and presumed murder in Paris of the Moroccan leftist leader, allegedly with the complicity of French and Moroccan officials--has provided the opposition with the newsworthy and exploitable issue of high-level official corruption. The opposition has also sought to exploit public discontent with government policies in the economic field, where the government is especially vulnerable. De Gaulle has tacitly recognized the potency of this criticism of his domestic policy by seeking to improve the government's image in this area.

The essentials of De Gaulle's foreign policy, especially concerning East-West issues, have not been effectively challenged since the election. His decision to resume French participation in EEC activity without achieving his political demands would appear at least in part to be an attempt to recoup the electoral losses suffered at the hands of the pro-European Lecanuet. It is likely, however, that Gaullist leaders attribute voter defection to their concern for French agricultural production rather than support for political supranation-

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alism. Hence De Gaulle may intend to disarm the opposition by negotiating the EEC agricultural agreement while still attempting to block supranational growth within the community.

The major push will come in the campaign for the National Assembly elections in March 1967. Until then, the opposition parties will be able to attack government policy in the parliament, which reconvenes in April, and

the government will learn whether it can still count on the unswerving allegiance of the Independent Republicans and even some UNR deputies. There is little prospect that a united, democratic opposition embracing both the center and left will emerge, but all factions hope that continuing attacks on such issues as the Ben Barka affair will weaken the Gaullists sufficiently to open the way to their defeat in 1967.

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